

**IN THE CLAIMS**

This listing of the claim will replace all prior versions and listings of claim in the present application.

**Listing of Claims**

1. (currently amended): A document search system comprising:  
an associative server which is capable of instructing a document search by specifying a document database  $j$  to be searched next among a plurality of document databases based on a search result generated from a previous search of a document database  $i[.]$ ; and  
an associative search recording table which records the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching said document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document database  $i$ ;  
means for sending a search result of said specified document database to a search client; and  
means for changing a showing order of document databases to be searched by using data from said associative search recording table,  
wherein a different associative search recording table is stored for each user, and by using said different associative search recording table for each user, a showing order of document databases to be searched is changed according to said user,  
wherein  $i$  denotes a first document database,  
wherein  $j$  denotes a second document database, and  
wherein  $x_{ij}$  denotes a number of times of searching said document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document database  $i$ .

2-3. (canceled).

4. (previously presented): The document search system according to claim 1, further comprising:

means for calculating a registration fee of each document database by using said associative search recording table.

5. (previously presented): The document search system according to claim 4, wherein a registration fee is calculated according to a sum of the number of times a document database is a search origin for a document search and the number of times a document database is a search target for a document search.

6. (currently amended): A search server for mediating between a search client and a plurality of document databases, comprising:

associative server means which is capable of instructing a document search by specifying a document database j to be searched next among a plurality of document databases based on a search result generated from a previous search of a document database i,

wherein said associative server means comprises:

search query analyzing means for analyzing a search query from said search client,

search query constructing means for sending the search query  
analyzed by said search query analyzing means to the document database  
specified by the search client,

means for sending a search result of said specified document database  
to said search client, and

associative search recording table storing means for storing an  
associative search recording table which records the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of  
searching said document database  $j$  based on the search results generated  
from the previous searches of said document database  $i$ , and

showing order changing means for changing a showing order of  
document databases to be searched and to be shown to said search client by  
using data from said associative search recording table.

wherein said associative search recording table storing means stores a  
different associative search recording table for each user.

wherein said showing order changing means changes a showing order  
of document databases to be searched and to be shown to said search client  
according to said user by using said different associative search recording  
table for each user.

wherein  $i$  denotes a first document database,  
wherein  $j$  denotes a second document database, and  
wherein  $x_{ij}$  denotes a number of times of searching said document  
database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches  
of said document database  $i$ .

7-8. (canceled).

9. (original): The search server according to claim 6, wherein a registration fee of each document database is calculated by using said associative search recording table stored by said associative search recording table storing means.

10. (previously presented): The document search system according to claim 1, wherein for each document database  $j$  of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each indicating the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching the document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of document databases  $i$ , respectively.

11. (previously presented): The document search system according to claim 1, wherein said associative search recording table records the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching said document database  $j$  based on a search result using a keyword  $i$  for searching said document database  $i$ .

12. (previously presented): The document search system according to claim 11, wherein for each document database  $j$  of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each indicating the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching the document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of document databases  $i$  or keywords  $i$  for searching said document databases  $i$ , respectively.

13. (previously presented): The search server according to claim 6, wherein for each of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each indicating the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous searches of document databases i, respectively.

14. (previously presented): The search server according to claim 6, wherein said associative search recording table records the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching a document database j based on a search result of a keyword i for searching said document database i.

15. (previously presented): The search server according to claim 14, wherein for each document database j, of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each indicating the number of times  $x_{ij}$  of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous searches of document databases i or keywords i for searching said document databases i, respectively.

16. (currently amended): A document search method comprising the steps of:

instructing a document search by specifying a document database j to be searched next among a plurality of document databases based on a search result generated from a previous search of a document database i;

storing an associative search recording table which records the number of times  $X_{ij}$  of searching said document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document database  $i$ ;  
and,

using data from said associative search recording table to help specify said document database  $j$  to be searched next among said plurality of document databases;

sending a search result of said specified document database to a search client; and

changing a showing order of document databases to be searched by using data from said associative search recording table,

wherein a different associative search recording table is stored for each user, and by using said different associative search recording table for each user, a showing order of document databases to be searched is changed according to said user,

wherein  $i$  denotes a first document database,

wherein  $j$  denotes a second document database, and

wherein  $X_{ij}$  denotes a number of times of searching said document database  $j$  based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document database  $i$ .

17-18. (canceled).

19. (currently amended): A document search method according to claim 16, further comprising the steps of: calculating a registration fee of each

document database by using said associative search recording table.

20. (currently amended): A document search method according to

claim 19, further comprising the steps of:

calculating the registration fee according to the sum of a number of times a document database is a search origin for a document search and the number of times a document database is a search target for a document search.

21. (previously presented): A document search method according

to claim 16, wherein for each document database j, of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each indicating the number of times  $X_{ij}$  of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document databases i, respectively.

22. (currently amended): A document search method according to

claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

storing, in the associative search recording table, the number of times  $X_{ij}$  of searching a document database j based on a search result of a keyword i for searching said document database i.

23. (previously presented) A document search method according to

claim 22, wherein for each document database j, of said plurality of document databases, said associative search recording table has plural entries each

indicating the number of times  $X_{ij}$  of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous searches of said document databases i or keywords i for searching said document databases i, respectively.